

FEDERAL LAW
NO. 125-FZ OF SEPTEMBER 26, 1997
ON THE FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE AND RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS
(with the Amendments and Additions of March 26, 2000, March 21,
July 25, 2002, December 8, 2003, June 29, 2004, July 6, 2006,
February 28, July 23, 2008)

Adopted by the State Duma on September 19, 1997
Approved by the Federation Council on September 24, 1997

The Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation,
reaffirming the right of every person to the freedom of conscience and faith as well as the equality before the law regardless of the attitude towards religion and convictions,
proceeding from the fact that the Russian Federation is a secular state,
recognizing a special role of the Orthodox Church in the history of Russia, the formation and development of its spirituality and culture,
having respect for the Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and other religions constituting an integral part of the historical heritage of the peoples of Russia,
believing it important to promote mutual understanding, tolerance and respect in matters of the freedom of conscience and faith, therefore, adopts this Federal Law.

Chapter I. General Provisions

Article 1. Subject of Regulation of This Federal Law

This Federal law regulates legal relationships in the field of human rights and the rights of every citizen to the freedom of conscience and faith as well as the legal status of religious associations.

Article 2. Laws on the Freedom of Conscience, Faith and Religious Associations

1. The laws on the freedom of conscience, faith and religious associations consist of the corresponding rules of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, the Civil Code of the Russian Federation, this Federal law, other regulatory legal acts of the Russian Federation to be adopted in accordance therewith as well as normative legal acts of the subjects of the Russian Federation.

2. The rights of man and citizen to the freedom of conscience and faith shall be regulated by the Federal Law. The laws and other regulatory legal acts to be adopted in the Russian Federation, involving the exercise of rights to the freedom of conscience and faith as well as the activities of religious associations shall be in accordance with this Federal law. In the event of discrepancy between this Federal law and the regulatory legal acts of the subjects of the Russian Federation on matters of protection of the rights to the freedom of conscience and faith and the activities of religious associations, this Federal law shall prevail.

3. Nothing contained in the legislation on the freedom of conscience and faith and religious associations shall be interpreted in the sense of impairment or infringement upon the rights of man and citizen to the freedom of conscience and faith guaranteed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation or ensuing from international agreements of the Russian Federation.

Article 3. The Right to the Freedom of Conscience and Faith

1. The Russian Federation guarantees the freedom of conscience and faith, including the right to profess individually or jointly with others any religion or to profess no religion whatever, to freely choose and alter, have and disseminate religious and other convictions and practice these in real life.

Foreign citizens and persons without citizenship that legally stay in the territory of the Russian Federation shall enjoy the right to the freedom of conscience and faith equally with the citizens of the Russian Federation and shall bear responsibility established under Federal laws for the violation of the legislation on the freedom of conscience, faith and religious associations.

2. The right of man and citizen to the freedom of conscience and faith may be restricted under the Federal law only in so far as it is required for purposes of protection of the basics of the constitutional regime, morals, health, rights and legitimate interests of man and citizen, insurance of the defenses of the country and the security of the state.

3. The establishment of privileges, restrictions or any other forms of discrimination depending on one's attitude to religion shall not be allowed.

*Federal Law No. 104-FZ of July 6, 2006 amended Item 4 of Article 3 of this Federal Law. The amendments shall enter into force as of July 6, 2006
See the Item in the previous wording*

4. The citizens of the Russian Federation shall be equal before the law in all the fields of the civil, political, economic, social and cultural life irrespective of their attitude to religion and religious affiliation. The citizen of the Russian Federation shall in the event that the military service runs counted to his convictions or religion have the right of substitution thereof with an alternative civil service.

5. No person shall be obliged to declare his or her attitude to religion and may not be subject to compulsion in determining his or her attitude to religion, nor shall he or she be forced to profess or refuse to profess religion, to participate or not participate in services of worship, other religious rights and ceremonies, the activities of religious associations and teaching religion. It shall be prohibited to draw minors into religious associations as well as to teach religion to minors against their will and without the consent of their parents or persons acting as parents.

On the Provision by State and Municipal Educational Institutions of an Opportunity for Religious Organisations to Provide Off-Curriculum Religion Classes to Children, see Order of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation No. 2833 of July 1, 2003

6. The prevention of exercise of rights to the freedom of conscience and faith, including that associated with violence against person, the intentional hurting of feelings of citizens in connection with their attitude to religion, the propaganda of religious supremacy, the destroyal of or damage to the property or a threat of commission of such actions shall be prohibited and prosecuted in accordance with the Federal law. Conducting public events, putting up texts and images that may hurt the religious feelings of citizens close to projects of religious worship shall be prohibited.

7. The secrecy of confession is guaranteed under the law. No clergymen may be brought to responsibility for refusal to testify about the circumstances that have become known to him from the confession.

Article 4. The State and Religious Associations

1. The Russian Federation is a secular state. No religion may be proclaimed as governmental and compulsory religion. Religious associations are separated from the state and are equal before the law.

2. In keeping with the constitutional principle of separation of religious associations from the state, the state:

shall not interfere with determining by the citizen of his or her attitude to religion and religious affiliation, the upbringing of children by parents or persons acting as parents in keeping with their convictions and with regard for the rights of the child to the freedom of conscience and faith;

shall not impose on religious associations the performance of functions of the bodies of state power, other public bodies, governmental agencies and bodies of local administration;

shall not interfere with the activity of religious associations, unless it conflicts with this Federal law;

shall ensure the secular nature of education at governmental and municipal educational establishments.

3. The state shall effect regulation in granting to religious organisations tax and other exemptions, extend financial, material and other assistance to religious organisations in the restoration, maintenance and protection of buildings and projects being monuments of history and culture as well as in arranging the teaching of general educational subjects at educational establishments set up by religious organisations as is envisaged under the laws of the Russian Federation on education.

4. The activities of bodies of state power and local administration shall not be accompanied by public religious rites and ceremonies. The officials of state authorities, other public bodies and bodies of local administration as well as servicemen shall have no right to use their official position to cultivate any particular attitude to religion.

5. In conformity with the constitutional principle of separation of religious associations from the state, the religious association:

shall be set up and pursue its activities in accordance with their own hierarchic and institutional structure, elect, appoint and replace its personnel as per its own regulations;

shall not perform the functions of state authorities, other public bodies, governmental agencies and bodies of local administration;

shall not participate in the elections to the bodies of state power and local administration;

shall not participate in the activities of political parties and political movements, nor shall provide them with material or any other assistance.

6. The separation of religious associations from the state shall not entail the restriction of the rights of

members of the said associatio to participate equally with other citizens in managing the affairs of the state, the elections to state authorities and bodies of local administration, the activities of political parties, political movements and other public associations.

7. At the request of religious organisations relevant bodies of state power in the Russian Federation shall have the right to proclaim religious holidays as non-working days (holidays) in respective territories.

Article 5. Religious Education

1. Each man shall have the right to receive religious education at his option individually or jointly with others.

2. The upbringing and education of children shall be the responsibility of parents or other persons acting as parents, with regard for the right of the child to the freedom of conscience and faith.

3. Religious organisations shall be entitled acting in accordance with their charters and subject to the laws of the Russian Federation to set up educational establishments.

4. At the request of parents or other persons acting as parents, with the consent of the children going to state and municipal educational establishments, the administration of the said establishments shall by agreement with the corresponding body of local administration provide a religious organisation with the possibility of teaching religion to children outside the framework of educational curriculum.

Chapter II. Religious Associations

Article 6. Religious Associations

1. Religious association in the Russian Federation shall mean any voluntary association of citizens of the Russian Federation, other persons residing permanently and legally in the territory of the Russian Federation, set up for purposes of joint profession and dissemination of faith characterized by features answering the said purpose, viz.:

- religious denomination;
- performance of services of worships, other religious rites and ceremonies;
- teaching religion and religious education of its followers.

2. Religious associations may be set up in the form of religious groups and religious organisations.

3. It shall be prohibited to set up religious associations within the bodies of state power, other public bodies, governmental agencies and bodies of local administration, military units, governmental and municipal organisations.

4. The formation and activities of religious associations whose objectives and actions are at variance with the law shall be prohibited.

Article 7. Religious Group

1. Religious group under this Federal Law shall mean any voluntary association of citizens set up with the objective of joint profession and dissemination of faith, carrying on its activities without the registration with the state authorities and without the acquisition of capacity of a legal entity. The premises and property required for the activities of the religious group shall be provided for use by such a group by its members.

2. The citizens that have formed a religious group with the intention to further transform it into a religious organisation shall inform the bodies of local administration of its formation and the start of its activities.

3. Religious groups shall have the right to perform divine services, other religious rites and ceremonies as well as to carry on teaching of religion and religious education of its followers.

*Federal Law No. 169-FZ of December 8, 2003 amended Article 8 of this Federal Law
See the previous text of the Article*

Article 8. Religious Organization

1. Religious organisation shall mean a voluntary association of citizens of the Russian Federation, other persons, residing permanently and legally in the territory of the Russian Federation, set up for purposes of joint profession and dissemination of faith that has been duly registered as a legal entity.

2. Religious organisations shall depending on the territorial spheres of their activities be divided into local and centralized.

3. Local religious organisation shall mean a religious organisation consisting of no less than ten persons not younger than 18 years old that permanently reside in the same locality or the same town or village settlement.

4. Centralized religious organisation shall mean a religious organisation consisting as per as its charter of no less than 3 local religious organisations.

5. The centralized religious organisation whose structures have operated in the territory of the Russian

Federation on legal grounds within no less than 15 years shall at the time of filing by the said religious organisation an application requesting for government registration, be entitled to use in its names such words as "Russia," "Russian," and their derivatives.

6. The religious organisation shall also mean an agency or an organisation set up by the centralized religious organisation in accordance with its charter that pursue the objective and possesses the features specified under [Item 1 of Article 6](#) hereof, including a governing or coordinating body or agency as well as the establishment of a professional religious formation.

7. The bodies of state power shall while examining issues involving the activities of religious organisations in the society take into consideration the territorial scope of operation of a religious organisation and provide relevant religious organisations with the possibility to participate in dealing with the said issues.

8. The name of a religious organisation shall contain an indication to its religion. The religious organisation shall be obliged to state its name in full in the exercise of its activities.

9. A religious organization shall be obliged to inform the body, that has rendered a decision on state registration thereof, about changes in the data indicated in Item 1 of Article 5 of the Federal Law on State Registration of Juridical Persons and Individual Businessmen, safe for data about obtained licenses, in three days at latest, as of the moment of such changes. Said body at latest in one working day, next following the date of receiving relevant information from the religious organization, shall inform about it the federal executive body authorized under Article 2 of the Federal Law on State Registration of Legal Entities (hereinafter referred to as the authorized registering body) that shall make an entry about changes of the data on the religious organization to the Unified State Register of Legal Entities.

Repeated failure of a religious organization to submit within the established term updated information required for introducing amendments to the Unified State Register of Legal Entities shall constitute a ground for the body, which has taken a decision on state registration of the religious organization, to lodge a claim with the court of law for declaring this organization as having ceased its activities as a legal entity and for exclusion thereof from the Unified State Register of Legal Entities.

A religious organization shall be also obliged to inform on an annual basis the body, that has rendered a decision on state registration thereof, about continuation of its activity.

Data on local religious organizations may be submitted by a relevant centralized religious organization in the procedure established by this Item.

Article 9. Setting up Religious Organizations

1. The founders of a local religious organisation may comprise no less than 10 citizens of the Russian Federation associated as a religious group, having a confirmation of its existence in the given territory within no less than 15 years, issued by the bodies of local administration or a confirmation of its membership in the centralized religious organisation of the same worship, issued by the said organisation.

2. The centralized religious organisations shall be set up upon the availability of no less than 3 local religious organisations of the same religion in accordance with the regulations of the said religious organisations, unless such regulations are at variance with the law.

Article 10. The Charter of Religious Organization

1. Religious organisation shall act on the basis of its charter to be approved by its founders or the centralized religious organisation which shall meet the requirements of the civil legislation of the Russian Federation.

For the procedure for registration of charters (regulations) of religious associations see the Order of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation No. 19-01-159-94 of November 30, 1994

2. The charter of a religious organisation shall state:
the name, place of location, type of religious organisation, faith denomination and in case of its membership in the existent centralized religious organisation, its name;
objectives, tasks and basic forms of activity;
procedure for establishment and cessation of activity;
structure of organisation, its bodies of management, procedure for formation and competence thereof;
sources of formation of monetary resources and other property of organisation;
procedure for introduction of changes and amendments into the charter;
procedure for disposal of the property in case of cessation of activities;
other data related to the peculiarities of activity of the given religious organisation.

Federal Law No. 58-FZ of June 29, 2004 amended Article 11 of this Federal Law

See the previous text of the Article

Article 11. Registration of Religious Organizations with State Authorities

See the Rules for Considering Applications and for Adopting the Decision on the State Registration of Religious Organizations by the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation and by Its Territorial Bodies, approved by Order of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation No. 68 of March 25, 2003

1. Religious organizations shall be subject to state registration in compliance with the Federal Law on State Registration of Legal Persons and Individual Businessmen, subject to the special procedure for state registration of religious organizations established by this Federal Law.

A decision on state registration of a religious organization shall be rendered by the federal executive body authorised in the sphere of the state registration of public associations (hereinafter referred to as the federal organ of state registration) or by a territorial agency thereof. An entry to the Unified State Register of Legal Entities of data on establishment, reorganization and liquidation of religious organizations, as well as of other data, provided for by federal laws, shall be made by the authorized registering body on the basis of a decision on a relevant state registration rendered by the federal body of state registration or by a territorial agency thereof. With this, a procedure for interaction of the federal body of state registration and of territorial agencies thereof with the authorized registering body with regard to state registration of religious organizations shall be determined by the Government of the Russian Federation.

See Administrative Rules of Procedure for the Exercise by the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation of the State Function of Making Decisions on the State Registration of Religious Organisations and Registration of Representative Offices of Foreign Religious Organisations, approved by Order of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation No. 98 of March 31, 2009

2. A decision on state registration of a local religious organization, as well as of a centralized religious organization having local religious organizations located on the territory of one subject of the Russian Federation, shall be rendered by a territorial agency of the federal body of state registration in an appropriate subject of the Russian Federation.

3. The federal body of state registration shall render a decision on state registration of a centralized religious organization having local religious organizations on the territories of two and more subjects of the Russian Federation.

4. A decision on state registration of religious organisations formed by a centralized religious organisations in accordance with [Item 6 of Article 8](#) hereof, shall be effected by the body which has rendered a decision on state registration of an appropriate religious organization.

5. For purposes of government registration of a local religious organisation, the founders shall submit to the respective a territorial agency of the federal body of state registration as follows:

- application for registration;
- list of persons setting up a religious organisation, indicating their citizenship, place of residence, date of birth;
- charter of religious organisation;
- minutes of the constituent assembly;
- document confirming the existence of a religious group in the given territory within no less than 15 years, issued by the body of local administration or confirming its membership in the centralized religious organisation, issued by its governing centre;
- data on the basic principles of religious teachings and the corresponding practice, including about the history of origin of religion and the given association, the forms and methods of its activity, the attitude to family and marriage, education, peculiarities of attitude to the health by the followers of the given religion, restrictions imposed on the members and clergymen of the organisation as regards their civic rights and duties;
- data on the address (location) of a standing governing body of a newly-formed religious organization which is used for contacting the religious organization;
- document confirming payment of the state duty.

See Forms of the Documents Required for the Purposes of State Registration of a Non-Commercial Organisation, endorsed by Decision of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 212 of April 15, 2006

6. In the event a superior governing body (centre) of the newly formed religious organisation is located outside the Russian Federation, it is required to submit besides the documents specified under [Item 5](#) hereof, according to the prescribed procedure also the charter or any other basic document of a foreign religious

organisation to be certified by the government body of the country of location of the said organisation.

7. The grounds for the government registration of centralized religious organisations as well as religious organisations to be set up by the centralized religious organisations shall be as follows:

application for registration;

list of founders of religious organisation;

charter of the newly formed religious organisation approved by its founders;

data on the address (location) of a standing governing body of a newly-formed religious organization which is used for contacting the religious organization;

notarized copies of the charter and document of government registration of the founder (founders);

relevant decision of an authorized body of the founder (cofounders);

a document confirming payment of the state duty.

In establishing a centralized religious organisation the founder (founders) shall also submit the charters of no less than 3 local religious organisations incorporated within its structure and the data on other religious organisations that are incorporated within the given structure.

Federal Law No. 160-FZ of July 23, 2008 amended Item 8 of Article 11 of this Federal Law. The amendments shall enter into force from January 1, 2009

See the Item in the previous wording

8. The application for the government registration of a religious organisation, set up by the centralized religious organisation or on the grounds of confirmation issued by the centralized religious organisation shall be reviewed within a month since the date of submission of all the documents specified herein. In other cases the body deciding on state registration of a religious organization, shall be entitled to extend the period of review of documents up to six months to conduct the state examination by the religion-competent experts. The procedure for conducting the state examination by religion-competent experts shall be such as prescribed by the authorized federal executive body.

9. In the event of the failure by an applicant (applicants) to meet the requirements specified under [Items 5-7](#) hereof, the body deciding on state registration of a religious organization, shall be entitled not to examine the application by sending an advice hereof to the applicant (applicants).

10. The federal body of state registration or a territorial agency thereof upon rendering a decision on state registration of a religious organization shall submit to the authorized registering body the data and documents required for exercising by this body the functions related to keeping the Unified State Register of Legal Entities.

On the basis of the decision on state registration of a religious organization, rendered by the federal body of state registration or by a territorial agency thereof, and the required data and documents, submitted by them, the authorized registering body in five working days at latest, as of the date of receiving the required data and documents, shall make an appropriate entry to the Unified State Register of Legal Entities and shall inform about it the body that has taken a decision on state registration of the religious organization at latest in one working day, next following the date of making said entry.

The federal body of state registration or a territorial agency thereof, in three working days at latest, as of the date of receiving from the authorized registering agency information about the entry on a religious organization made to the Unified State Register of Legal Entities, shall issue to the applicant a document confirming the fact of making the entry on the religious organization to the Unified State Register of Legal Entities.

11. The changes and amendments introduced in the charters of religious organisation shall be registered with state authorities according to the procedure prescribed for registration of religious organisations and shall take effect for third persons since the government registration thereof.

12. A state duty for state registration of a religious organization and the amendments introduced to the charter thereof shall be collected in the procedure and in the amount stipulated by the laws of the Russian Federation.

Article 12. Refusal to Effect Government Registration of Religious Organization

1. The government registration may be refused to a religious organisation whenever:

the objectives and activities of a religious organisation run counter to the Constitution of the Russian Federation and the laws of the Russian Federation - by reference to specific articles of the laws;

the given organisation has not been recognized as a religious organisation;

the charter and other submitted documents do not meet the requirements of the laws of the Russian Federation or the data contained therein are not true;

the organisation with the same name has already been registered in the unified state register of legal entities;

the founder (founders) is legally incompetent.

*Federal Law No. 31-FZ of March 21, 2002 amended Item 2 of Article 12 of this Federal Law. The amendments shall enter into force as of July 1, 2002
See the previous text of the Item*

2. In case of refusal of government registration of a religious organisation the decision taken shall be communicated in writing to an applicant (applicants) by indicating the reasons for refusal. The refusal for reasons of inexpediency of setting up a religious organisation shall not be permitted. The refusal of government registration of a religious organisation as well as its evasion from such registration may be protested against in court of law.

Article 13. The Representations of Foreign Religious Organizations

1. Foreign religious organisation shall mean an organisation set up outside the Russian Federation in accordance with the laws of a foreign state.

2. Foreign religious organisation may be granted the right to open its representative office in the territory of the Russian Federation.

The representation of a foreign religious organisation may not engage in the activities of worship and other religious activities and shall not enjoy the status of a religious association as established hereunder.

*Federal Law No. 160-FZ of July 23, 2008 amended Item 3 of Article 13 of this Federal Law. The amendments shall enter into force from January 1, 2009
See the Item in the previous wording*

3. The procedure for registration, establishment and closure of a representative office of a foreign religious organisation shall be prescribed by the authorized federal executive body in keeping with the laws of the Russian Federation.

*Federal Law No. 160-FZ of July 23, 2008 reworded Item 4 of Article 13 of this Federal Law. The new wording shall enter into force from January 1, 2009
See the Item in the previous wording*

4. In the event of taking a decision in favour of registration of a representative office of a foreign religious organisation, its representative shall be given a certificate according to the model form set by the authorized federal executive body.

5. The Russian religious organisation shall be entitled to have under it a representative office of a foreign religious organisation.

*Federal Law No. 58-FZ of June 29, 2004 amended Article 14 of this Federal Law
See the previous text of the Article*

Article 14. Suspension of the Activity of a Religious Association, the Liquidation of a Religious Organization and the Prohibition of the Activity of a Religious Association, if They Violate the Legislation;

1. Religious organisations may be liquidated:

by decision of their founders or a body authorized thereto by the charter of a religious organisation;

by court decision in the event of repeated or gross violations of the rules of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, this federal law and other federal laws or in the event of systematic performance by a religious organisation of activities running counter to the objectives of its creation (statutory objectives).

2. The grounds for liquidation of a religious organisation, banning the activities of a religious organisation or a religious group by due course of law shall comprise as follows:

the breach of public security and public order;

acts aimed at the performance of an extremist activity;

forcing to break the family;

encroachments on the personality, rights and freedoms of citizens;

infliction of damage established under the law to morals, health of citizens, including the use in connection with their religious activity of narcotic drugs and psychotherapeutic agents, hypnosis, the commission of acts of perversion and other unlawful actions;

inducement to suicide and refusal for reasons of religion to give medical aid to persons in a state endangering their life and health;

preventing a citizen by using a threat of damage to his life, health, or property, provided there is a real danger of realization of same, or a threat of violence or by other illegal actions from withdrawing from a religious associations;

preventing from getting compulsory education;

forcing members and followers of religious associations and other persons to alienate their property in favour of religious associations;

encouraging citizens to refuse to perform the civil duties established under the law and to commit other wrongful acts.

3. The bodies of the prosecutor's office of the Russian Federation, the federal body of state registration or territorial agencies thereof, as well as bodies of local administration shall have the right to file applications to the court requesting the liquidation of religious organisation or the ban on the activity of a religious organisation or a religious group.

4. State registration of a religious organization in connection with liquidation thereof shall be carried out in the procedure provided for by the Federal Law on State Registration of Legal Persons and Individual Businessmen subject to the peculiarities of such registration established by this Federal Law.

The data and documents required for carrying out state registration of a religious organization in connection with liquidation thereof shall be submitted to the body that has rendered a decision on state registration of this religious organization, when established.

The federal body of state registration or a territorial agency thereof upon the adoption of a decision on state registration of a religious organization in connection with liquidation thereof shall direct to the authorized registering body the data and documents required for exercising by this body the functions related to keeping the Unified State Register of Legal Entities.

On the basis of said decision, rendered by the federal body of state registration or a territorial agency thereof, and the required data and documents, submitted by them, the authorized registering body in five working days at latest, as of the date of receiving the required data and documents, shall make an appropriate entry to the Unified State Register of Legal Entities and shall inform about it the body, that has rendered said decision, at latest in one working day, next following the date of making an appropriate entry.

A procedure for interaction of the federal body of state registration and territorial agencies thereof with the authorized registering body with regard to state registration of religious organizations in connection with liquidation thereof shall be determined by the Government of the Russian Federation.

State registration of a religious organization in connection with liquidation thereof shall be carried out in ten working days at latest, as of the date of submitting all the documents drawn up in the established procedure.

5. The legal capacity of the religious organisation to be liquidated as a legal entity shall cease and the property of the said religious organisation shall be distributed as is provided for under its charter and the civil legislation of the Russian Federation.

6. The grounds and the procedure for liquidation of a religious organisation by a court decision shall also apply in respect to the ban on the activities of a religious group.

7. The activity of a religious association may be suspended, a religious organization may be liquidated and the activity of a religious association, which is not a religious organization, may be prohibited in the order and on the grounds, envisaged in the Federal Law on the Counteraction to an Extremist Activity.

Chapter III. Rights and Conditions of Activity of Religious Organizations

Article 15. Internal Regulations of Religious Organizations

1. Religious organisations shall operate in accordance with their internal regulations unless these conflict with the laws of the Russian Federation, and shall possess legal competence envisaged in their charters.

2. The state shall respect the internal regulations of religious organisations, unless the said regulations run counter to the laws of the Russian Federation.

Article 16. Religious Rites and Ceremonies

1. Religious organisations shall have the right to open and maintain buildings and structures of worship, other places and projects specially intended for acts of worship, the meetings for saying prayers and other religious meetings, religious worship (pilgrimage).

2. The divine services, other religious rites and ceremonies shall be freely performed at buildings and structures of worship and in the territories adjoining thereto, other places made available to religious organisations for the said purposes, at places of pilgrimage, agencies and enterprises of religious organisations, cemeteries and crematoria as well as in living premises.

3. Religious organisations shall have the right to perform religious rites at medical and prophylactic establishments, hospitals, orphanages, boarding houses for the aged and invalids, at institutions enforcing criminal penalties in the form of imprisonment at the request of their inmates in the rooms specially assigned by the administration for the said purposes. The performance of religious rites in the rooms of places of detention shall be allowed subject to the observance of the requirements of the criminal and procedural legislation of the Russian Federation.

4. The command of military units shall not with due regard for the requirements of military manuals prevent the servicemen from participation in the acts of worship, other religious rites and ceremonies.

Also see the Law of the Russian Federation No. 4338-I of January 22, 1993 on the Status of Servicemen

5. In other cases public worship, other religious rites and ceremonies shall be performed according to the procedure established for conducting meetings, operas and demonstrations.

Article 17. Religious Literature and Objects of Religious Purpose

1. Religious organisations shall be entitled to manufacture, acquire, export, import and disseminate religious literature, printed, audio- and video-materials and other objects of religious purpose.

2. Religious organisations shall enjoy the exclusive right of establishing organisations that print religious literature and manufacture objects of religious veneration.

3. The literature, printed, audio- and video-materials produced by religious organisations shall have the marking bearing the official name in full of the given religious organisation.

Article 18. Charities and Cultural and Educational Activities of Religious Organizations

1. Religious organisations shall be entitled to pursue charitable activities both directly and through the establishment of charitable institutions.

2. To implement its statutory objectives and tasks, religious organisations shall according to the procedure established under the laws of the Russian Federation have the right to set up cultural and enlightenment organisations, educational and other establishments as well as open organs of mass media.

3. The state shall assist and support the charitable activities of religious organisations as well as the realization by them of socially important cultural and enlightenment programs and events.

Article 19. Institutions of Professional Religious Education

1. Religious organisations shall acting in accordance with their charters have the exclusive right to set up establishments of professional religious education (religious educational establishments) to train ministers of religious worship and religious personnel.

*Federal Law No. 14-FZ of February 28, 2008 amended Item 2 of Article 19 of this Federal Law
See the Item in the previous wording*

2. Establishments of professional religious education (ecclesiastical educational institutions) shall be registered as religious organisations and shall receive a government license for the right to engage in the educational activities. Institutions of professional religious education (ecclesiastical educational institutions) may realise, on the basis of the licences, educational curricula in conformity with the requirements of the federal state educational standards and, in the event of the obtaining of state accreditation, issue in the established procedure documents of the state pattern on the relevant level of education. The state status of an institution of professional religious education (ecclesiastical educational institution) (the type, kind and category of the educational institution determined in accordance with the level and focus of the educational curricula realised by it) shall not be established in its state accreditation.

*Federal Law No. 104-FZ of July 6, 2006 amended Item 3 of Article 19 of this Federal Law. The amendments shall enter into force as of July 6, 2006
See the Item in the previous wording*

3. The citizens taking studies at full-time departments of the establishments of professional religious education enjoying a government license shall have privileges envisaged under the laws of the Russian Federation.

Article 20. International Relations and Contacts

1. Religious organisations shall be entitled to establish and maintain international relations and contacts, including for purposes of pilgrimage, participation in meetings and other events, acquiring religious education as well as to invite for the said purposes foreign citizens.

2. Religious organisations shall have an exclusive right to invite foreign citizens for purposes of carrying

on professional, including preaching, religious activities in the given organisations according to the federal laws.

Article 21. Ownership of Religious Organizations

1. The ownership of religious organisations may include buildings, land plots, projects of production, social, charitable, cultural-enlightenment and other purposes, objects of religious purpose, monetary means and other property essential for ensuring their activities, including that regarded as monuments of history and culture.

2. Religious organisations shall be vested with the right of ownership in the property acquired or created by them with their own means, donated by citizens, organisations or passed over to religious organisations as ownership by the state or acquired through any other means not prohibited under the laws of the Russian Federation.

See Regulations on Handing Over to Religious Organizations of the Property for Religious Purposes Presently in the Federal Ownership, approved by Decision of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 490 of June 30, 2001

3. The transfer into ownership of religious organisations for functional purposes of buildings and structures of worship together with the land plots and other property of religious purpose related thereto used to be owned by the state or the municipality shall be effected free of charge.

4. Religious organisations may possess as their ownership also property located abroad.

5. The personal and real property of religious purpose may not be charged under the claims of creditors. The list of property of worship which may not be charged under the claims of creditors shall be specified by the Government of the Russian Federation in accordance with the proposals of religious organisations.

Article 22. Using the Property Owned by the State Citizens and Their Associations

1. Religious organisations shall be entitled to make use for their needs of land plots, buildings and property made available to them by the state, municipal, public and other organisations and individuals as is envisaged under the laws of the Russian Federation.

On the procedure for handing over to religious organizations of the property for religious purposes presently in the federal ownership, see Decision of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 490 of June 30, 2001

2. The transfer to religious organisations for using according to their functional purpose of buildings and structures of worship together with the land plots and other property of religious purpose related thereto owned by the state or the municipality shall be carried out free of charge.

Article 23. Business Activities of Religious Organizations

Religious organisations shall be entitled to engage in business activities and create their own enterprises according to the procedure prescribed under the laws of the Russian Federation.

Article 24. Labour Legal Relationships in Religious Organizations

1. Religious organisations shall in accordance with their charters have the right to make employment contracts with their workers.

2. The conditions of work and remuneration shall be set in accordance with the laws of the Russian Federation in an employment contract to be made between a religious organisation (employer) and employee.

3. The citizens employed at religious organisations under employment contracts shall be covered by the labour legislation of the Russian Federation.

4. The employees of religious organisations as well as the clergymen shall be covered by social welfare, social insurance and pension maintenance as is provided under the laws of the Russian Federation.

**Chapter IV. Supervision and Control over the Implementation
of the Laws on the Freedom of Conscience,
Faith and Religious Associations**

Article 25. Exercise of Supervision and Control

1. The supervision of the implementation of the laws of the Russian Federation on the freedom of conscience, faith and religious associations shall be the responsibility of the bodies of the prosecutor's office of the Russian Federation.

*Federal Law No. 31-FZ of March 21, 2002 amended Item 2 of Article 25 of this Federal Law. The amendments shall enter into force as of July 1, 2002
See the previous text of the Item*

2. The organ that has rendered a decision on state registration of a religious organization shall exercise control over the compliance thereby with the charter as regards the objectives and procedure for its activities.

Article 26. Liability for the Violation of Laws on the Freedom of Conscience, Faith and Religious Associations

The violation of the laws of the Russian Federation on the freedom of conscience, faith and religious associations shall entail the criminal, administrative and other liability in conformity with the laws of the Russian Federation.

Article 27. Final Provisions

1. This Federal Law shall take effect since its official release in the press.

2. The Government of the Russian Federation shall be required to adopt the regulatory legal acts essential for the implementation of this Federal Law.

3. The charters and other constituent documents of religious organisations set up prior to entry into effect of this Federal Law, shall be brought into line with this Federal Law. The charters and other constituent documents of religious organisations before they have been brought into accord with this Federal Law shall be effective only in the part that does not conflict with this Federal Law.

The new registration of religious organisations concerning which there are grounds for their liquidation or banning their activities, specified under [Item 2 of Article 14](#) hereof, shall not be required. Upon refusal to re-register for the said reasons, the body of registration shall pass the materials over to the court.

Religious organisations that do not have a document confirming their existence in the corresponding territory within not less than 15 years shall have the right of a legal entity provided they are re-registered annually till the expiration of the said 15-years' term.

In the given period the said religious organisations shall not have the rights specified under [Item 4 of Article 3](#), [Items 3 and 4 of Article 5](#), [Item 5 of Article 13](#), [Item 3 of Article 16](#), [Items 1 and 2 of Article 17](#), [Item 2 of Article 18](#) (with respect to educational establishments and mass media), [Article 19](#) and [Item 2 of Article 20](#) hereof.

*Federal Law No. 45-FZ of March 26, 2000 amended Item 4 of Article 27 of this Federal Law
See the previous text of the Item*

4. The government re-registration of religious organisations set up prior to the entry into effect of this Federal Law, shall be carried out not later than December 31, 2000 in accordance with the requirements of this Federal law. Upon the expiry of the indicated date the religious organisations that have not been reregistered shall be subject to liquidation judicially by demand of the body carrying out the state registration of religious organisations.

5. To declare as null and void the Law of RSFSR on the Freedom of Faith (Vedomosti of the Congress of Peoples' Deputies of RSFSR and the Supreme Soviet of RSFSR No. 21, item 240, 1990; Collected Legislation of the Russian Federation No. 5, item 346, 1995) and the Decision of the Supreme Soviet of RSFSR On the Procedure for Putting into Effect of the Law of RSFSR on the Freedom of Faith (Vedomosti of the Congress of Peoples' Deputies of RSFSR and the Supreme Soviet of RSFSR No. 21, item 241, 1990) since the date of [coming into force](#) of this Federal Law.

President of the Russian
Federation
Moscow, the Kremlin

B. Yeltsin